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# **Catholic Colonial Schools in Pennsylvania**



**By the**  
**Rev. James A. Burns, C. S. C., Ph.D.**

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## Catholic Colonial Schools in Pennsylvania.



### ATTITUDE OF THE QUAKERS

**W**HEN the Jesuits established themselves at Bohemia, it was, as has been observed, partly with the purpose of making that place a base for missionary work in the newly founded colony of the Quakers to the North. The broad-minded tolerance of Penn in religious matters attracted people of all creeds to his colony. A strong stream of emigration set in early from Germany, which Penn himself visited for the purpose of securing emigrants.<sup>1</sup> Many of these came from the Rhine provinces, and among them were a considerable number of Catholics. Most of the German emigrants were farmers, and naturally continued the same occupation after their arrival in this country, taking up lands to the west and northwest of Philadelphia. Emigrants came in large numbers from Ireland also, though somewhat later. The proportion of Irish became noticeably large about the year 1717, and ten years later the Irish outnumbered greatly all other nationalities in the list of emigrants for the

<sup>1</sup> Bolles, *Hist. of Penn.*, II, p. 146.

year.<sup>2</sup> Most of these were from the North of Ireland, and were Protestants, but there were some Catholics among them. The tendency of the Irish was to settle in Philadelphia or the other towns.

Teaching school was a favorite occupation of the better educated Irish emigrants after their arrival, at least until something more advantageous offered. Many of the emigrants were "redemptioners," or indentured servants, being bound to service for a term of years in payment for their passage to America or for other obligation, and some of these engaged in school-teaching. There are frequent references to Irish school-masters in Pennsylvania during the first half of the 18th century, and mention is made of several who were Catholics. A letter of the Rev. Mr. Backhouse, an Episcopalian clergyman, of Chester, Pa., written in 1741, to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, in London, has a special interest in this connexion, in that it discloses the attitude of the Quakers toward Catholics in general, and incidentally, to some extent, toward Catholic schools. It appears that the Episcopalians of Chester had brought a school-teacher of their faith from Maryland, and had had him open a school. As they were not numerous enough themselves to support him, they endeavored to induce the Quakers to patronize the school. What the Quakers did, we are told

<sup>2</sup> *Amer. Cath. Hist. Researches*, XVI, p. 68 *et seq.*, and XVIII, p. 99.

by Mr. Backhouse in words that still glow with the fervor of his astonished indignation:

They did what none but Quakers dare do in a country under the government of a Protestant king; that is, they engaged by their great encouragement a rigid, virulent Papist to set up school in the said town of Chester, in order to oppose and impoverish the said Protestant teacher. Under such proceedings we meekly and seriously debated the matter with him. . . . Yet, notwithstanding they did, and still persist to encourage the same. Nay, they carried their implacable malice so far as to occasion by threats and promises most of the children who were under the said Protestant teacher's tuition to be taken from him without being able to give any reason for such their proceedings.<sup>3</sup>

Writing again to the Society the following year, he is obliged to complain that the Quakers "still maintain their Papist master purely in opposition to ours." The Quakers were, in fact, friendly to Catholics, as they were in general to all denominations, and Catholics in Pennsylvania appear to have enjoyed the full religious liberty guaranteed by the Charter of William Penn, notwithstanding the existing proscriptive laws against them in England.<sup>4</sup>

A favorable opportunity thus offered in Pennsylvania for the work of the Jesuits. From about the beginning of the eighteenth century the scattered Catholics there were visited from time to time by missionaries from Maryland.

<sup>3</sup> *Amer. Cath. Hist. Researches*, XI, p. 62.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, IX, p. 24.



## CATHOLIC COLONIAL SCHOOLS

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In 1730, Father Greaton, S. J., came from Maryland, and established himself in Philadelphia. Out of a total population of about 10,000 in the city, he organized the first little Catholic congregation consisting of 37 persons, and four years later was able to erect a modest church.<sup>5</sup> The influx of Catholic emigrants soon called for additional laborers in this ripening harvest-field, and in 1741 Father Greaton was joined by the Rev. Henry Neale, S. J. The same year, the German Province of the Society of Jesus sent out two priests to minister to the German Catholics in the colony. These were Father Wapeler, who founded the missions of Conewago and Lancaster, and Father Schneider, who took up his residence at Goshenhoppen, in Berks county. Other German Jesuits came later on, one of these being the celebrated Father Farmer.<sup>6</sup>

### THE FIRST SCHOOLS

There is no documentary proof to show the time of the establishment of the first Catholic schools in Pennsylvania, but there is strong traditional evidence for the belief that they date back to the time of the very first organization of the Church in the various centers of Catholic life. Local traditions indicate that in nearly every instance the organization of a Catholic parish was attended, if not preceded, by the organization of a parish school, the priest himself,

<sup>5</sup> *Amer. Cath. Hist. Researches*, IX, p. 24.

<sup>6</sup> *U. S. Cath. Mag.*, IV, No. 4, p. 249 *et seq.*

in some cases, being the first school-teacher.<sup>7</sup> Mr. Martin I. J. Griffin, a competent historical authority here, has summed up the result of a thorough investigation of the subject in the statement that, "wherever throughout Pennsylvania prior to 1800 there was a chapel, there was undoubtedly, where there was a number of children, and where Catholics were in fair numbers, some system of instruction, even though the method was crude and but elementary in its extent."<sup>8</sup> This conclusion is further supported by the fact that the other religious denominations in the colony, especially those which were German, almost invariably signalized the beginning of church work in a locality by the establishment of schools.<sup>9</sup> It is reasonably certain that the Jesuits, with their known zeal for education, were not behind the ministers of other denominations in practical effort to furnish the children of their respective flocks with the opportunity for at least a rudimentary schooling.

There seems to be a recognition of the existence of a school in Philadelphia for some time and of the need of providing larger and better accommodations for the pupils, in the will of James White, a merchant, made in 1767, and bequeathing 30 pounds "towards a school-

<sup>7</sup> Wickersham, *Hist. of Education in Penn.*, p. 115 *et seq.* Riley, *Conewago*.

<sup>8</sup> Letter to the Superintendent of Catholic Schools, Philadelphia, 1905.

<sup>9</sup> Wickersham, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

house.”<sup>10</sup> This is the earliest known bequest made in behalf of Catholic education in the colony. Again, in 1782, there is evidence that a school had long been in existence there, in the fact that a subscription was taken up for the purpose of paying for the “old school-house and lot” just purchased from the Quakers, and of erecting a new school building. Previous to this date, the school was probably taught in the parochial residence.<sup>11</sup> Among the German Catholics scattered through the counties farther west, a school was probably started near Conewago by Father Wapeler, a few years after his arrival there,<sup>12</sup> and probably, also, in the course of time, at several of the missions attended from Conewago, chief among which were Sportsman’s Hall, Carlisle, Milton, York, Taneytown, Frederick, Littlestown, Brandt’s Chapel, now Paradise, and Hanover. About 1787 the school near Conewago was so far developed as to be able to engage the services of the very capable school-master at Goshenhoppen, for we find him mov-

<sup>10</sup> *Rec. Amer. Cath. Hist. Soc.*, VI, p. 459. The James White here mentioned was the ancestor of a Catholic family that has figured largely in the history of the church in this country. Edward Douglas White, who was appointed an Associate Justice of the U. S. Supreme Court in 1894, is a great-grandson of this first lay benefactor of Catholic education in Pennsylvania. *Ibid.*, p. 467.

<sup>11</sup> *Amer. Cath. Hist. Res.*, X, p. 60; Woodstock Letters, XIII, p. 33; Letter of Mr. Martin I. J. Griffin.

<sup>12</sup> Wickersham, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

ing there at that time.<sup>13</sup> Goshenhoppen, too, where Father Schneider resided, became the center of a circle of missions, a number of which also had schools. From the will of John McCarthy, we have evidence of the existence of a school at one of these missions, Haycock, in 1766; and again, in 1784, the marriage of Ferdinand Wagner, "our schoolmaster at Haycock," is recorded in the Goshenhoppen register.<sup>14</sup> There was thus a Catholic school at Haycock long before there was a Catholic church there. According to local tradition, mass was said in McCarthy's house, and school was kept in another building on the premises until the erection of a permanent school building with the church later on.<sup>15</sup> Reading was another mission-station which in all probability had a Catholic school soon after the organization of the Catholic congregation there in 1755.<sup>16</sup>

#### GOSHENHOPPEN

A peculiar interest attaches to the school at Goshenhoppen.<sup>17</sup> The Jesuit missionaries in America, it has already been observed, were men

<sup>13</sup> Riley, *Collections and Recollections*, History of the Gubernator Family, VII, p. 530 *et seq.*; Letter of Mr. John T. Riley to the author.

<sup>14</sup> Goshenhoppen Registers, in *Records of the Amer. Cath. Hist. Soc.*, VIII, p. 388.

<sup>15</sup> Letter of Mr. Martin I. J. Griffin.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Now known as Bally, in Berks Co.

of marked abilities and learning, as a class,—men, oftentimes, who had occupied places of distinction in the seminaries or universities of the order in the Old World. The German Jesuits who labored in the rough mission fields of Pennsylvania during those early days were men of this kind. Of Father Wapeler, Bishop Carroll wrote that “he was a man of much learning and unbounded zeal.” He referred to Father Schneider as a “person of great dexterity in business, consummate prudence and undoubted magnanimity,” and said that “he spread the faith of Christ far and near.”<sup>18</sup> An old Jesuit catalogue refers to the founder of the Goshenhoppen mission as, “*Theo. Schneider, qui docuit Philos. et contro. Leodi. et fuit rector magnif. Universi. Heidelbergensis.*”<sup>19</sup> Father Schneider was born in Germany in the year 1700. He entered the Jesuit order while still young, and his superior talents caused him to be sent, after ordination, to the famous Jesuit seminary at Liège, in Belgium, where he taught both philosophy and theology. Subsequently, he was sent to Heidelberg, to teach in the university or the college established by the Jesuits in connexion with the University in 1703. Heidelberg was a Catholic University then, the Faculty of Philosophy, from the year 1716, being under the control of the Jesuits.<sup>20</sup> In this way, Father Schneider came

<sup>18</sup> *U. S. Cath. Mag.*, IV, p. 250.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Paulsen, *Geschichte des Gelehrten Unterrichts*, p. 278.

to be chosen and installed as rector in December, 1738, his term of office lasting until December of the following year.<sup>21</sup> It was a high distinction to have come to one comparatively so young—a fine tribute to his talents as well as to his popularity, and it opened up the prospect of a brilliant career. But a nobler and holier fire than that of intellectual ambition burned in the soul of Father Schneider. Like St. Francis Xavier, he turned aside from the shining heights of academic fame, to devote himself, as a poor and humble missionary in a distant land, to the ministry of souls. There was a call for German priests from the far-off frontiers of Pennsylvania, and Father Schneider was one of the two who were sent from Germany to inaugurate the apostolic work.

It is interesting to contemplate the brilliant young priest, fresh from the honors and the experience gained while fulfilling the office of *Rector Magnificus* of Heidelberg University, gathering the poor German children of Goshenhoppen and vicinity about him in his little room, to teach them, along with the simple catechism,

<sup>21</sup> For the date of Father Schneider's rectorship of Heidelberg University I am indebted to Prof. Wille of that institution, who, at my request, made a search of the archives for the purpose. The archives reveal nothing more about Father Schneider than the fact of his having held the office of rector and the dates. For the manner of electing the rector, and the duties and honors attaching to the position, cf. Raumer, *Geschichte der Pädagogik*, Vierter Theil, S. 18 et seq.

the rudiments of a brief pioneer education. There can be no doubt that he himself took up the work of teaching, soon after his arrival in 1741. Reading, writing, and spelling were about all that was taught at that early period in the schools that were being started everywhere in the colony.<sup>22</sup> Little if any attention was given to what is now called arithmetic. The term of schooling was brief, the pupils were few and of all ages. There was no church in Goshenhoppen as yet, Mass being said in one of the farmers' houses. Father Schneider took up his residence in a two-story frame house, the largest, probably, in the vicinity, and here, according to local traditions, he began his school.<sup>23</sup> The school was eagerly attended by the children of the whole neighborhood, Protestant as well as Catholic, it being the only one in the place. Father Schneider, in fact, soon made himself greatly beloved by the members of all denominations, and there is a tradition that when, in 1745, he commenced the work of building a church, the Protestants of the region were not less generous than the Catholics in helping to furnish the necessary material means.<sup>24</sup> It is pleasant to record that the educational zeal of the first schoolmaster at Goshenhoppen was not forgotten by the descend-

<sup>22</sup> Wickersham, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115; *Amer. Cath. Hist. Res.*, XVII, p. 98; Letter of Father Bally, pastor of Goshenhoppen, in Woodstock Letters, V, pp. 202, 313.

<sup>24</sup> *U. S. Cath. Mag.*, IV, p. 250 *et seq.*

ants of the early settlers. More than a century afterwards, the public school authorities of the district showed their appreciation of what he had done, by an arrangement which provided for the education of the children of the Goshenhoppen parish school at the public expense.<sup>25</sup>

Under Father Schneider, the work of organizing the parish at Goshenhoppen, as well as the neighboring Catholic missions, went steadily on. A church was built, a tract of about 500 acres of land purchased, and the land sold off from time to time in small portions, with the result of bringing about a considerable settlement of Catholic families near the church. For twenty-three years he lived at Goshenhoppen, ministering to the Catholics there and in the region for fifty miles around. He was skilled in medicine, and was frequently called upon to minister to the sick in the capacity of a physician. As "Doctor Schneider" he was often enabled to gain access to persons and places which he could not otherwise have visited. We have an evidence of his love of books, as well as of his incessant activity, in a beautifully bound manuscript copy of the entire Roman Missal, transcribed by his own hand—a piece of work that doubtless helped to fill out many a long wintry day, a work that witnesses, too, to his life of extreme self-sacrifice and poverty.<sup>26</sup> Before he died, in 1764, he had the satisfaction of seeing the Church firmly es-

<sup>25</sup> Woodstock Letters, V, pp. 202, 313.

<sup>26</sup> *U. S. Cath. Mag.*, IV, p. 249 *et seq.*



established in Pennsylvania; and in the building of churches, schools and mission chapels, together with the increasing influx of Catholic emigrants, he must have discerned the prospect of a much greater and more rapid growth in the future.

For many years, however, the growth of the Church in and around Goshenhoppen was slow, and Father Schneider's school remained small. The French and Indian War came on, and the country became the scene of the most savage depredations on the part of the Indians. After Braddock's defeat, in 1755, Berks county was laid waste with fire and sword, hundreds of houses were burned, and many of the settlers slain and scalped, or dragged away into captivity to undergo a fate worse than death.<sup>27</sup> In 1757, the total number of adult Catholics in the county was only 117.<sup>28</sup> Yet Father Schneider seems to have kept up his school all this time, and to have gradually increased the number of pupils attending, for in 1763, about the time of the close of the war, we find that the school was large enough to engage the services of a paid school-teacher. The baptismal register of Goshenhoppen for that year records the private baptism of a child, when eleven weeks old, by "Henry Fredder, the school-master at Conisahoppen."<sup>29</sup> A schoolhouse, too,

<sup>27</sup> Egle, *Hist. of Pennsylvania*, p. 384.

<sup>28</sup> *Amer. Cath. Hist. Res.*, VII, p. 88.

<sup>29</sup> *Records Amer. Cath. Hist. Soc.*, II, p. 328. The spelling of the name of the place must have been a perpetual puzzle to the children of Father Schneider's

apparently had been built. From this time on, there are frequent references to the schoolmasters in the parish records.

The schoolmaster was evidently looked upon as a person of distinction in the little world of Goshenhoppen, contrary to the custom which prevailed in the colonies generally. He stood next to the parish priest, and was his right-hand man, a sort of lay assistant, in matters relating to the temporal, and even the spiritual welfare of the Catholic flock. Three schoolmasters are mentioned in the parish registers between 1763 and 1796, Henry Fredder, Breitenbach, and John Lawrence Gubernator. Breitenbach does not seem to have stayed for more than a short time, as we have only a single mention of him, as standing sponsor for a child, with "his wife Susan," in 1768. He was preceded by Henry Fredder, who is mentioned occasionally between 1763 and 1768. There is an interval then of sixteen years, during which we have no means of knowing who the school-teacher was, for if his name is given in the registers, as it probably is, the title of his office is not subjoined. John

school, since even the pastor, as is evident from the above entry, did not seem to be able to fix upon any definite form. "Goshenhoppen" was the more commonly used name, but no less than seventeen different ways of spelling the name occur in the parish records between 1735 and 1787. Besides the two already given, we have Gosshehopen, Cossehoppa, Quesohopen, Cushenhoppen, Cowshoppen, with others quite as curious. Cf. *ibid.*, VIII, p. 341.

#### CATHOLIC COLONIAL SCHOOLS

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Lawrence Gubernator, the most distinguished of the Goshenhoppen schoolmasters, and the ancestor of the numerous Pennsylvania families who have borne that name, appears first on the parish registers in 1784. He was born in Oppenheim, Germany, in 1735, served as an officer in the army of the Allies in the Seven Years' War, and came to America during the Revolutionary War. He landed in Philadelphia, and made his way to Goshenhoppen, where he was engaged by Father Ritter, then pastor, to take charge of the school. He seems to have been a finely educated man, and a devoted teacher, and rendered great services to the cause of Catholic education in Pennsylvania during a period of twenty-five years. He served as organist as well as schoolmaster. Not long after coming to Goshenhoppen, he was married to a widow named Johanna Darham. It was made a gala day in the old Catholic settlement, and the chronicle of the happy event in the parish records, brief as it is, affords us a pleasant glimpse of the position of social prominence accorded to this successor of Father Schneider in the Goshenhoppen school.<sup>80</sup> He subsequently taught school near Conewago, returned to Goshenhoppen, and, after several years, finally settled down as a teacher in the newly started preparatory seminary of the Sulpicians at Pigeon Hills, Pa. His son became a

<sup>80</sup> Goshenhoppen parish registers, in *Rec. Amer. Cath. Hist. Soc.*, VIII, p. 388.

## IN PENNSYLVANIA

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school-teacher also, and had charge for a time of the school near Conewago.<sup>31</sup>

### LANCASTER

There is reason for believing that a school was founded at Lancaster also at a very early date, although local tradition is silent on the point. Father Farmer was there from 1752 to 1758, and he was not the man to permit the parish to be behindhand in the matter of education, even if Father Wapeler had not been able to see his way to the establishment of a school at an earlier date. When the Rev. John B. Caussee took charge of the parish in 1785, he probably found a Catholic school in existence, and we find him petitioning the State authorities for the establishment of a "charity school" at Lancaster. Instead of a "charity school," however, he started an institution of a higher grade, in conjunction with the other denominations of the place, which was chartered by the legislature under the name of Franklin College.<sup>32</sup>

### FATHERS FARMER AND MOLYNEUX

Father Farmer, whose real name was Steinmeyer, was a famous figure in the history of the Church of Pennsylvania. Born in Germany in 1720, he passed through a university course, devoting special attention to physics. When

<sup>31</sup> Riley, *Collections and Recollections*, History of the Gubernator Family, II, p. 530.

<sup>32</sup> S. M. Sener, in *U. S. Cath. Hist. Mag.*, I, p. 215.

twenty-three years of age he joined the Jesuit order, and was sent to America in 1752. After being six years at Lancaster, he was called to Philadelphia to minister especially to the Germans there, and continued to make that city the center of his extensive missionary labors until his death in 1786. He founded mission stations in New Jersey, and organized a Catholic congregation in the City of New York. His genial temperament and lively charity endeared him greatly to the inhabitants of Philadelphia, regardless of religious beliefs. He was a member of the famous Philosophical Society, of Philadelphia, and was made a member of the Board of Trustees of the University of Philadelphia, when that institution was chartered in 1779.<sup>33</sup> Another learned Jesuit who labored in Philadelphia during the Revolutionary War was the Rev. Robert Molyneux, the companion of Father Farmer during many years at St. Mary's Church.<sup>34</sup> He was an Englishman by birth, and a man of extensive knowledge, his society being eagerly sought for in the most polite circles in Philadelphia, then the capital city. He was a favorite guest at the house of the Marquis de la Luzerne, Minister Plenipotentiary from France, and became instructor in English to him.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> *U. S. Cath. Mag.*, IV, p. 249; *Amer. Cath. Hist. Res.*, Vol. II, New Series, p. 72.

<sup>34</sup> The new church built by Father Harding in 1763 was called St. Mary's.

<sup>35</sup> *U. S. Cath. Mag.*, IV, p. 249 *et seq.*

Under the direction of these able and universally respected priests, the Church made rapid progress in Philadelphia, and broad and firm foundations were laid for a system of Catholic schools. It is impossible to tell how much we are indebted to these two men for the change which came over the Continental Congress and the country generally during the Revolutionary War in respect to the Catholic Church. There were, of course, deeper causes at work, but surely something must be credited to the personal influence of Fathers Molyneux and Farmer, who, in character, seemed each to combine the finest traditions of Jesuit scholarship and Jesuit piety, and who, in their daily lives, were thrown into frequent contact with many of the men who were engaged in framing the new government and informing it with its spirit. Many were the notable gatherings that St. Mary's Church witnessed during the Revolutionary War. It was the place of worship for the diplomatic representatives of the Catholic powers. Washington was twice at Vespers there, and more than once it is recorded that the members of Congress attended the services in a body.<sup>86</sup>

#### THEIR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSE

The education of the Catholic children of Philadelphia claimed the special attention of

<sup>86</sup> *Amer. Cath. Hist. Res.*, XIII, p. 174; New Series, I. p. 161.

Fathers Molyneux and Farmer. Father Molyneux was the first in this country, so far as is known, to get out text-books for the use of Catholic schools. He had a catechism printed, and other elementary books, among which was "a spelling primer for children with the Catholic Catechism annexed," printed in 1785.<sup>87</sup> The latter were probably reprints of commonly used text-books for spelling and reading, with modifications and additions to make them adaptable for use in Catholic schools. He was the first to make extensive use of the press to disseminate religious truth, importing Catholic books from England, and causing to be reprinted in Philadelphia such works as Challoner's *Catholic Christian Instructed*, and *The History of the Bible*.<sup>88</sup>

It was from the beginning the steady purpose of those in charge of the Church in Philadelphia to provide a training under Catholic auspices for all the Catholic children of the city. A clear evidence of this purpose is afforded in the case of the children of the exiled Acadians, a colony of whom took refuge in Philadelphia. In 1771, a petition was forwarded to the General Assembly of Pennsylvania, praying for the granting of relief to some of the Acadians who were sadly in need of it, and among others to Ann Bryald, a Catholic lady who had been engaged to

<sup>87</sup> Sketches of Father Molyneux, in *U. S. Cath. Mag.*, IV, p. 249 *et seq.*; *Amer. Cath. Hist. Res.*, V, p. 31.

<sup>88</sup> *U. S. Cath. Mag.*, *loc. cit.*

teach their children. The petition refers to her as "Ann Bryald, a woman who acts as Schoolmistress to the Children, and on that account in need of assistance, as she cannot work for a livelihood, her whole time being taken up in the Care of them."<sup>39</sup> The event shows how careful the good pastors were that no portion of their growing flock should be left without the opportunity of a sound religious and secular education. The difficulty of securing a Catholic teacher who understood French would account for the anxiety to retain the services of Ann Bryald. The parish was poor, too. The total annual revenue from all sources at this time amounted to only about 90 pounds;<sup>40</sup> and the support of the regular parish school must have been felt as a burden already sufficiently heavy. Another illustration of this fixity of educational purpose was afforded on the occasion of the yellow fever scourge. In the year 1798, and during several preceding years, the city was ravaged by the disease, and hundreds of Catholics fell victims to it. To care for the helpless orphans left behind, an association was formed which succeeded in establishing a Catholic orphans' home and school, and this institution developed subsequently into St. Joseph's Orphan Asylum, the first Catholic orphan asylum within the limits of the United States.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>39</sup> *Amer. Cath. Hist. Res.*, XVIII, p. 141.

<sup>40</sup> *U. S. Cath. Mag.*, IV, *loc. cit.*

<sup>41</sup> Shea, *Life and Times of Archbishop Carroll*, p. 414.



## GROWTH OF PHILADELPHIA SCHOOLS

Toward the close of the Revolutionary War, with the influx of Catholic emigrants, there was a great increase in the Catholic population of Philadelphia. Two more priests arrived, and the number of adult Catholics in the city, in the year 1784, was reckoned by Father Molyneux to be about 2,000.<sup>42</sup> The number of children in the school was correspondingly increased, and the need was felt of larger and better quarters. The old schoolhouse and lot of the Quakers was purchased for 400 pounds in 1781. A new schoolhouse was built for 440 pounds, and subscriptions were started to meet the cost of these extensive improvements, which involved a total debt of approximately 1000 pounds. The general interest of Catholics in the matter of education was shown by the ready and generous response to the appeal of Father Molyneux, a sum of over 320 pounds being raised by individual subscriptions within a year. Among the largest contributors were, besides Father Molyneux himself, Captain Baxter's wife, Captain John Walsh, Captain James Byrne, James Oeller, the Catholic ambassadors, and Thomas Fitzsimons, a signer of the Constitution, who was a member of the parish and a staunch advocate of Catholic schools.<sup>43</sup>

The new schoolhouse was finished in 1782, and

<sup>42</sup> *U. S. Cath. Mag., loc. cit.*

<sup>43</sup> *Rec. Amer. Cath. Hist. Soc., IV, passim.*

probably opened for the first time in August of that year. It was two stories high, and was no doubt regarded by the Catholics of Philadelphia as a thing perfect in its kind. The walls were plastered, and the interior wood-work painted. One of the items of expense was "308 panes of window glass," each 8 x 10 in. Firewood was to be supplied regularly and abundantly for the new building. Light, heat, and sanitation were evidently carefully looked after according to the standards of the time. The school was divided into two sections. The upper schoolroom was reserved for the younger children, the lower for "such as shall be fit for Writing & Cyphering."<sup>44</sup> Two teachers were consequently employed. The affairs of the church and school at this time were administered by a board of managers, at the head of which were the pastors. Later on, when the church was incorporated, the board of managers became the board of trustees.

The school was called a "free school," but the term then did not mean precisely what it does now. It was hoped, however, to make it in time an endowed school, and thus relieve parents of the necessity of paying tuition for their children. As a step in this direction, and with the view of providing for the education of the poorer children of the congregation, the managers resolved, in 1783, that each of the teachers should

<sup>44</sup> Minutes of the board meeting, Sept. 1, 1783, in *Rec. Amer. Cath. Hist. Soc.*, IV, p. 268.

furnish instruction gratis to six poor scholars annually.<sup>45</sup> From the rest they were to receive payment. In 1794 the tuition charge was 17s. 6d. for the pupils in the upper room, and 20s. for those in the lower. But there must have been difficulty in collecting the money, for this plan was soon abandoned, and the teachers paid a fixed salary out of the parish treasury, the money being raised by means of "charity sermons," church collections, and occasional gifts. The salary of the head schoolmaster, in 1788, was 75 pounds per annum. The cost of text-books, considering the scarcity of books at the time, was not great. Spelling-books sold for 10d. apiece, catechisms for 5d., and "fables," or readers, for 3s. 9d. Children were received as young as six years of age.

The managers were determined to bring the work of the school up to the highest possible standard of excellence. One of the means adopted for this purpose was the offering of cash premiums to the pupils having the best records. It was resolved that, "as an encouragement to the Children's improvement at school, premiums be given them four times in the year, viz., the first Mondays in February, May, August & November, to the value of Twenty shillings each time."<sup>46</sup> Very little vacation, if any, it would appear, was allowed during the summer months.

The greatest difficulty experienced by the man-

<sup>45</sup> Minutes of the board meeting, *ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

agers in their efforts to improve the school came from the lack of good teachers. Between 1787 and 1800, the head teacher was changed eight times. The plan of having a woman teacher for the girls was tried and found to give satisfaction. A constant effort was made to secure better teachers. It must be remembered that teaching was not regarded as a profession in those days, and most of those who took up the work continued in it only until they were able to get something better. To meet this difficulty, the salaries of the teachers were raised again and again. In 1795, the salary of the head master was \$400, but out of this he had to pay "a female assistant to the care of the girls," which assistant was "subject to his jurisdiction and to the approbation of the Trustees." There seem to have been three teachers employed at this time, as besides the head teacher and his assistant in charge of the girls, we find that there was another teacher who was known as the "Master of the Poor School."<sup>47</sup> The "Poor School" consisted of those pupils who were unable to pay their tuition, with, probably, the small boys. The salary of the "Master of the Poor School" was 120 pounds (Pennsylvanian standard), or about \$337. The known teachers of St. Mary's School up to 1800 were, Hugh Sweeney, Edward Barrington, Patrick Brady, Mrs. Short, Mr. and Mrs. McLaughlin, T. Reagan, Mr. Brady, Mr. Graham,

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

Mr. Chapman, James Reagan, Terence Byrne, and P. J. Doyle.

The school was thus growing, the class-rooms were crowded, and an enlargement of the building had to be made. New problems were springing up as the result, involving the separation and classification of the pupils and the differentiation of the teaching. The solution of these problems meant increased expense. Collections were taken up in the church at intervals for the benefit of the school, and the interest of the people in education and in the efforts that were being made toward its improvement may be gauged, in some measure, by the extent of the response to these appeals. The collection was generally preceded by a "charity sermon," or an address by one of the more able preachers, upon the object to which the proceeds were to be applied. In 1788, the collection for the school which was taken up on 4 May, brought 50 pounds, while in November of the same year the collection amounted to 39 pounds. Besides this, there were individual gifts, which were often of a considerable sum.<sup>48</sup>

The general interest in education, and the generosity of the people in contributing to its support, is shown even more notably by the donations and bequests made from time to time, having for their object the permanent endowment of the school. Between 1788 and 1810 there were twelve bequests or donations made to the school with this end in view. Some of these gifts were

<sup>48</sup> Minutes of the board meeting.

in the form of houses or lands, others in cash or bonds. The largest was that of James Costelloe, whose will was made in Philadelphia in 1793. He bequeathed 20 acres of land on Boon Island, Kingessing, "the rents, issues and profits to be divided into equal parts, one moiety or half to be forever appropriated towards the maintenance and support of the Free School of St. Mary's."<sup>49</sup> This property was subsequently sold for \$2000. Among the benefactors of St. Mary's school was Commodore John Barry, the "Father of the American Navy." In 1803, he left an annuity of 20 pounds, the principal of which, on the death of his negro man, was "to be given to the Trustees of the Roman Catholic Society worshipping at the Church of St. Mary, in the city of Philadelphia, for the use and benefit of the poor school of said church." The principal, when turned over to the corporation, amounted to \$900.<sup>50</sup>

An interesting feature of the school, which serves to show the efforts made to reach all classes of the Catholic population, was the giving of instruction in the evening to such, as for one cause or another, were unable to come during the day. It may have been due also, in part, to lack of room in daytime. There is no evidence to show when this "night-school" was started, or how long it continued, but it was in exist-

<sup>49</sup> *Amer. Cath. Hist. Res.*, VIII, p. 19.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

## CATHOLIC COLONIAL SCHOOLS

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ence in 1805, as on the evening of May 21, that year, the meeting of the trustees—they met in the schoolhouse—could not be held on account of the session of the “night-school.”<sup>51</sup> A “singing-school” was also established, to prepare singers for the choir, but it probably had no connexion with the regular school.

### THE MOTHER-SCHOOL

If the account of St. Mary's School has been somewhat long and detailed, it is due to a desire to set forth, as fully as the documentary evidence will permit, the plan of the school, and, above all, the motives which lay back of its organization and development, for it may be said to have been the mother-school of all the parochial schools in the English-speaking States. Philadelphia was the largest city, and St. Mary's was the largest and richest Catholic parish, in the United States. It was the center of Catholic power and influence, and other parishes, as they grew up, especially in the cities, naturally looked to it for guidance in the solution of the many problems that confronted the newly-organized Catholic congregation under New-World conditions—foremost and most far-reaching of which was the problem of religious education. The problem had been solved in Philadelphia, solved apparently to the satisfaction of both clergy and laity, as the result of a process of development

<sup>51</sup> Griffin, *History of Bishop Egan*, p. 15.

springing from newly-developed needs. The solution resulted in fixing an education ideal, which has struck its roots deeper and more firmly into the Catholic American mind with every year that has since elapsed.

The influence of this idea was shown shortly in the organization of other parishes in Philadelphia. The Germans broke off from St. Mary's parish in 1788, and soon afterward built a church of their own—Holy Trinity. Provision was immediately made for a parish school. As they were not able to build a school house as yet, the basement of the church was set apart for that purpose, and fitted up as a schoolroom. The church was described as being "100 feet long and 60 feet broad, and underneath was a comfortable schoolroom."<sup>52</sup> A few years later, with the rapid growth of the parish, the need of a separate schoolhouse was felt, and the congregation had recourse to a lottery—a commonly employed means of raising money for charitable purposes at the time. The sum of \$10,000 was wanted, and the legislature of Pennsylvania was petitioned for the legal power to create a lottery in that amount. The Act was passed in 1803, and the lottery was a great success. The tickets were sold for \$6 apiece, and there were 6,274 prizes, amounting to \$8,700.<sup>53</sup>

A third parish in Philadelphia was organized

<sup>52</sup> *Hist. Sketches of the Cath. Church in Phila.*, p. 43.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.





in 1796 by members of the Augustinian Order, and became known as St. Augustine's. For some years, the members of the new parish continued to send their children to St. Mary's School, but in 1811 a school was begun at St. Augustine's which combined instruction in preparatory and collegiate, as well as elementary branches. It opened with 39 pupils. The example set by St. Mary's was imitated by other parishes also as they grew up, a school being usually begun as soon as the congregation was organized and a place of worship secured.<sup>54</sup>

The factional troubles which broke out in St. Mary's Parish in 1812 and continued for many years, to the great detriment of the Church in Philadelphia, had a very injurious effect upon the school in point both of efficiency and of attendance. Nevertheless, the old school continued to exist and to render valuable service to the cause of Catholic education. St. Mary's School was not attached to St. Mary's Church, but was back of Walnut street, next to the "Old Chapel" of St. Joseph's. The school building which had been erected in 1782, was torn down in 1838, when the present St. Joseph's Church was built, St. Joseph's having become a separate congregation after 1821. After 1838, school was kept in the basement of St. Joseph's Church, but in 1852 a three-story school building, which is still standing, was built on the northern part of St. Joseph's

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

IN PENNSYLVANIA

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lot, with the entrance from Walnut street. The present schoolhouse annexed to St. Mary's Church was built in 1843.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Letter of Mr. Martin I. J. Griffin to the author.



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